

Tasmania

Farmers & Fruit-Growers of the Antipodes

By Frank Fox

Author of "Australia," "Beneath an Ardent Sun," etc.

TASMANIA, the southern island of the Australian Commonwealth, reproduces curiously both the natural features and the social atmosphere of England. Its fields recall "green and cloudy England"; it has a noble lakeland district; its many beautiful rivers, such as the Derwent and the Tamar, are as English in character as they are in name. The crops, too, are markedly English in character. Hop-growing is one of the chief agricultural industries. On the rich river-flats of the river Derwent and its tributaries the vines are planted, and, as in England, the harvest-time is the signal for an exodus of city workers who come with wives and children to make a happy and wholesome living hop-picking for a month or more.

Another characteristic Tasmanian industry is that of apple-farming. Probably the biggest flow of money from abroad comes to Tasmania when the apple harvest cheques arrive from London. Under the stimulus of those cheques there has grown up a fine race of sturdy "mixed farmers" on the Huon river frontages in Tasmania. Their staple crop is the apple, and the average yearly yield from the apple crop sent to London in a good season would be £250 or £300. In addition to growing apples the Huon farmer runs a few sheep on the poor-soil hills at the back

of his river meadow, and keeps a few cows and pigs, the latter, fed on skim milk, apples, and oats, producing bacon fit to rank with any in the world. Astonishingly little do these farmers need from outside their farms. The town stores are drawn upon only for clothes and a few groceries. Some of the older-fashioned farmers even grist their own grain, and have their breakfast porridge of home-grown oats.

Of great value to a country is such a class as this, since there is no imaginable blow of fate which can seriously threaten their stability. A war, or some such calamity, may cut them off from their market and make them for a while poor, but it cannot make them hungry. Whatever happens, they can be sure of food and some degree of comfort. It is



THE ISLAND OF TASMANIA



GATHERING THE HARVEST IN A TASMANIAN APPLE ORCHARD

Orchards that were the glory of Devonshire are rivalled in the fruit-growing districts of Tasmania, where thousands of acres are devoted to apples, pears, plums, cherries, apricots, and peaches, besides strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, and currants. The largest area is devoted to apples, and this fruit is the staple crop of the mixed farms on the Huon river frontages above Hobart

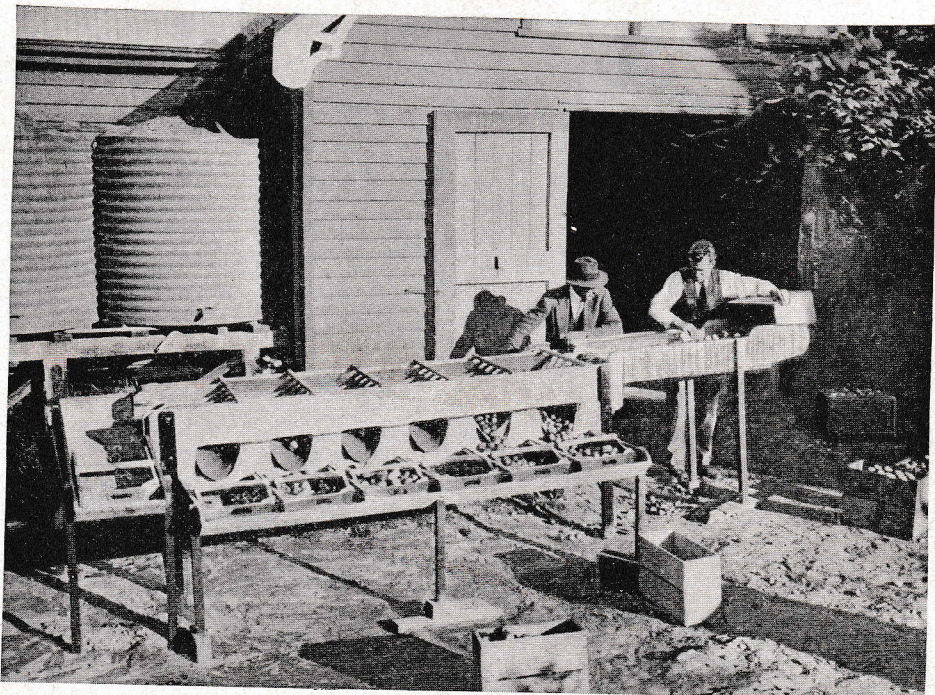
Photo, Spurling

the ideal of the reformer in many a land to see increase the number of petty farmers such as the apple-growers of the Huon and the hop-growers of the Derwent river, Tasmania.

It was the fortune of Tasmania to be chosen in the early days as a place of quiet retreat by many retired British civil servants, military and naval officers on pension, and Anglo-Indians. The climate was gentle; the natural beauty of the land great; the absence of the expensive luxuries of civilization made living very cheap. These colonists set themselves to reproduce English conditions as far as they could. English fields, English gardens, and English houses; English trout and salmon in the rivers—all helped to make Tasmania an antipodean Home Country. Social life, too, was modelled very closely on that of England of a century ago. Hobart, the capital, had very much the atmosphere of Bath in England. Thus, until recently the social life

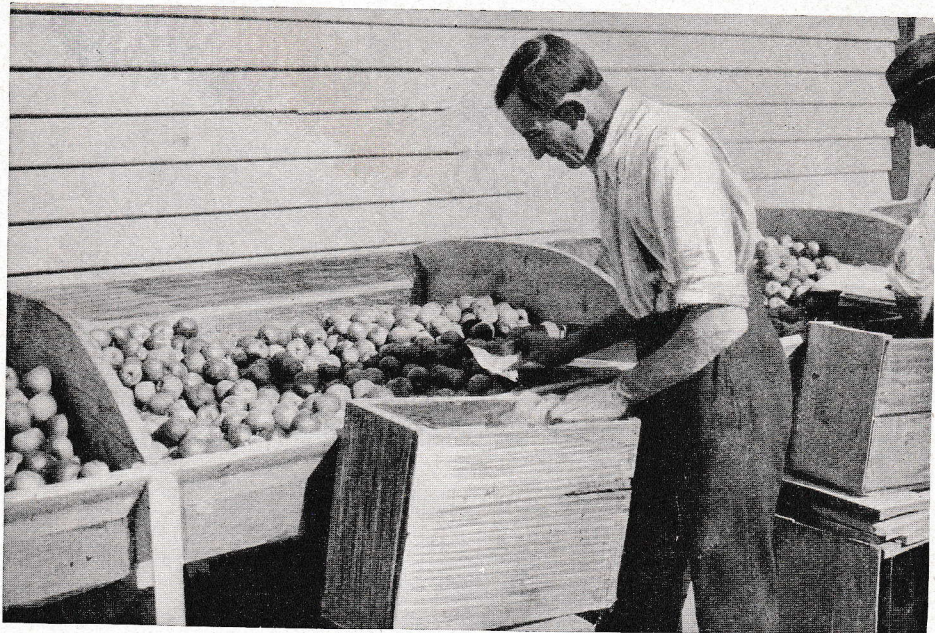
of Tasmania was in marked contrast to that of the neighbouring Commonwealth. Before it threw in its lot with the Commonwealth, Tasmania was rather proud of being "old-fashioned and English," as contrasted with the more advanced and modern mainland. She modelled her educational system closely on that of England. The Government endowed with liberal grants of free lands great schools which modelled their systems exactly on those of Eton and Harrow and Rugby. Long before the patriotic genius of Cecil Rhodes founded the Rhodes Scholarships to send young citizens of the overseas Dominions to learn the culture of English Universities, the Tasmanian Government had discovered the value of this plan, and sent yearly to the Home Country Universities two "Tasmanian scholars."

Tasmania was discovered first by the Dutch. Antony Van Diemen, the governor-general of the Dutch East



GRADING APPLES IN A SIZING MACHINE NEAR HOBART

As illustrated in the opposite page, apples for the export market are all picked most carefully by hand to avoid bruising. From the orchards they are carried to the sheds where they are graded according to size in a simple but ingenious sizing machine. During this process opportunity is provided for further inspection and the rejection of injured fruit which might spoil a consignment



TASMANIAN APPLES BEING PACKED FOR EXPORT

After being graded according to size the apples are packed in cases which hold an average of 43 lb. apiece. The Tasmanian fruit-grower sends the bulk of his produce to New South Wales and to Great Britain, and in a good season looks to make £250 to £300 from his apples alone. Tasmanian fruit-canning and jam-making industries readily absorb the rest of his crops

Photos, Merl La Voy



ROUNDING UP A LIKELY LOT OF MERINO SHEEP ON A FARM NEAR LAUNCESTON

Tasmania ranks high among the states of the Commonwealth for the quality of its sheep. Sheep-breeders' associations specialise on the improvement and development of particular stock, such as Southdowns and Shropshires, and these crossed with the Merino strain have produced such good results that Tasmanian stud flocks are largely drawn upon by breeders in the other states. There was a somewhat serious shortage of sheep in 1921, but, despite this fact, the number of sheep in Tasmania remains generally steady at something over a million and a half

Photo, Tasmanian Government

TASMANIA & ITS PEOPLE

Indies, sent out an exploring expedition in 1642 under Abel Janz Tasman to explore the seas south and south-east of the Dutch territory. Tasman encountered the coast of Tasmania on November 24 of that year. He named the land Van Diemen's Land, in honour of his governor-general, and followed its coast-line for some time, and then went on to visit New Zealand, the Friendly, and the Fiji Islands.

The Dutch did not attempt to follow up their discovery of Tasmania. In 1787, when Captain Phillip founded the first Australian settlement at Botany Bay, it was thought that Van Diemen's Land (which was not renamed Tasmania until 1856) was part of the Australian continent, and it was included in the annexation of that country. An adventurous voyage by Flinders in a whale-boat gave the first evidence of a strait cutting off Van Diemen's Land from the continent. In the year 1795, Lieutenant Flinders, of the *Reliance*, started in a small boat, with Surgeon Bass, a series of explorations of the Australian coast.

First White Settlement in Tasmania

In December, 1797, when Flinders was away with his ship, Bass obtained the loan of a whale-boat and a crew of eight men, with the object of following the unknown Australian coast southward. He discovered Twofold Bay on his way, and, proceeding onward, rounded Wilson's Promontory, and reached, in spite of head winds, the inlet that he named Western Port. He took careful note of the evidence this gave regarding the existence of a strait cutting off Van Diemen's Land from the continent; and, towards the close of the next year, Governor Hunter placed a schooner and its crew at the disposal of Flinders, that the question might be cleared up. Bass joined him, and the two set out for the Furneaux Group, and thence sailed along the north of Van Diemen's Land, round Cape Grim, down the west coast of the island, round into Storm

Bay, up the Derwent, and then back to Sydney.

The first white settlement in Tasmania was not made until 1803. In 1825 the island was proclaimed as a separate Crown Colony independent of Australia, to be governed by a nominated Legislative Council. From that date until the foundation of the Australian Commonwealth in 1901, Tasmania shaped her independent course, securing responsible government in 1856. In the negotiations for the union of the Australian states into the Commonwealth, Tasmania took a very independent part.

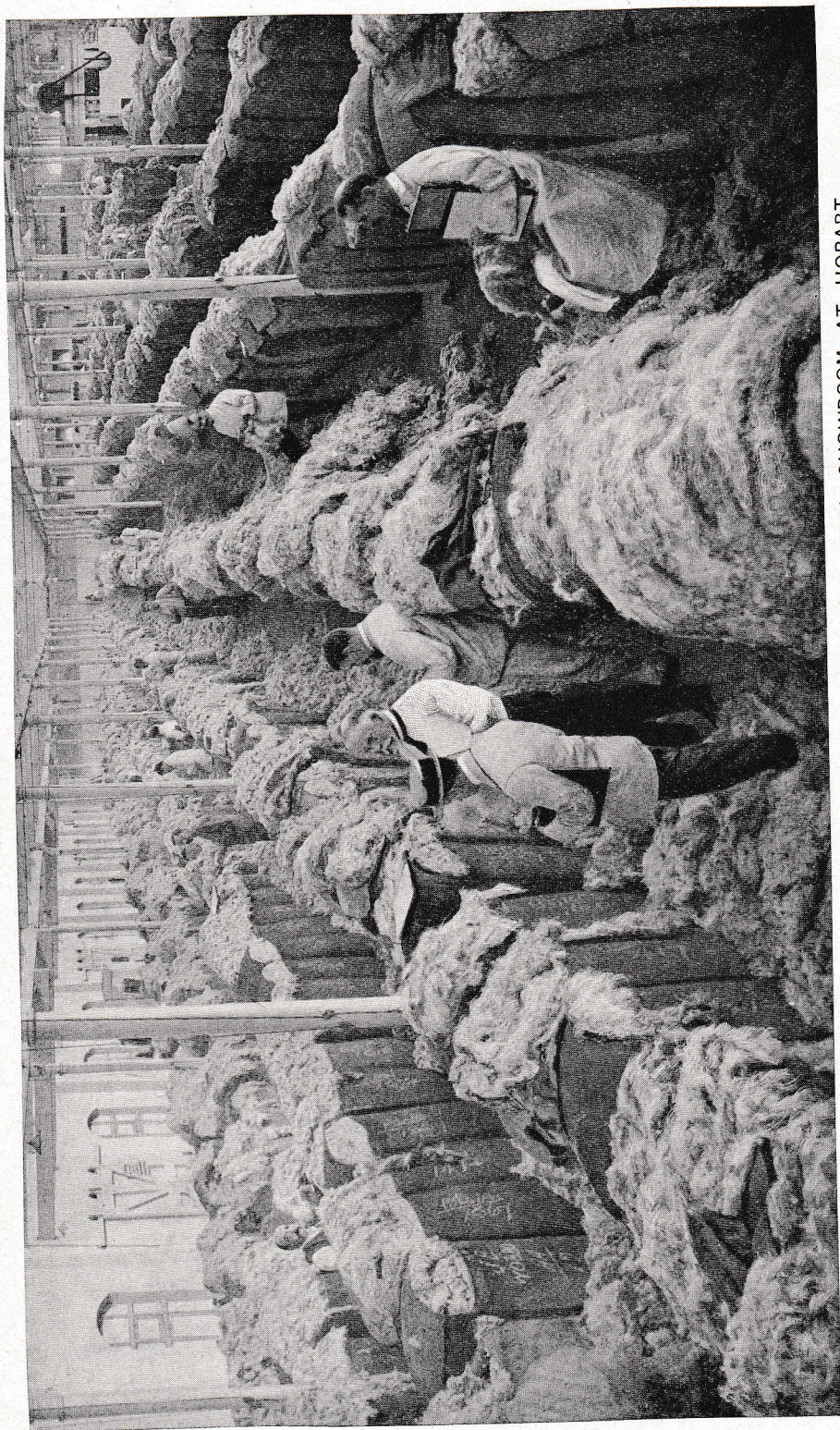
"Braddon's Blot"

It was Sir Edward Braddon who fixed in the first Australian Constitution the clause which was known to its critics as "Braddon's Blot," and which was designed to prevent the small states having their identity obliterated when they joined in the Commonwealth.

Since the foundation of the Commonwealth Tasmania naturally has lost her special characteristics to a great extent; she is more Australian, less distinctively Tasmanian. But there will always remain some distinction. The Tasmanian climate makes the faces of the people softer and rosier than those of the mainland, and will keep their character a little different from that of the Australian living under his ardent sun.

Who Were the Original Tasmanians?

The differences between the Tasmanian and the Australian white races of to-day are easily enough explainable by the different character of the colonisation and the different climate. Far more difficult it is to explain the very curious differences to be observed at the time of the first white settlement between the aboriginal population of Tasmania and her fauna and flora, and those of the neighbouring continent. The Tasmanian aborigines (now extinct) were in several respects different from the Australian type. The question of their



EXPERT ASSESSORS VALUING THE YEAR'S CLIP IN THE WOOL SHOWROOM AT HOBART

Unlike New Zealand, where the frozen meat industry has led to the breeding of large sheep with valuable carcasses and mediocre wool, Tasmania has preferred to produce sheep with more useful types of wool, and wool is now Tasmania's principal export, the average quantity being between eight and nine million pounds. The great wool showroom at Hobart provides a remarkable spectacle when filled with the great bags creaming over with fleece, between the long lines of which the valuers pass, assessing the market value of the clip

Photo, Beattie

TASMANIA & ITS PEOPLE

origin is one of great complexity and difficulty to ethnologists.

Huxley concluded that they were a Negrito modification of the great Negroid type of mankind which had migrated eastwards to New Caledonia, and subsequently southwards to Tasmania. Another authority considers that they were an autochthonous race, or possibly a cross between such a race and invading colonists of the Polynesian family. Yet another authority, Barnard Davis, classes them as a peculiar and distinct race dwelling in their own island. Other ethnologists have classed them as (1) a distinct sub-division of the black races or (2) as wandering members of the Melanesian group modified from the original type.

Yet another scientific opinion is that the physical characters, manners, customs, mental qualities, and the language of the Tasmanians make reasonable a theory that they were the original inhabitants of Australia who were displaced from the continent by the present straight-haired natives, but who survived in the southern island until the advent of white colonisation.

A Race Now Quite Extinct

The Tasmanian aborigine was generally of a more robust and more enterprising type than the Australian, and had the negro characteristic of curly hair. If he occupied the island when it formed continuous land with Australia, and arrived there with the marsupial animals, his history connected with the island must date back to a very remote age, for the continental aboriginal type had departed very far from the Tasmanian when the white men arrived, though there are some characteristics of the South Australian aborigines which link them with the Tasmanian aborigines.

It has to be recorded, unfortunately, that the Tasmanian aboriginal race is now quite extinct. Convicts in the early days, escaping to the bush, by their cruelties inflamed the natives to hatred of the white disturbers. The

Tasmanian black was far more courageous and truculent than the Australian black. He retaliated freely and outrages were frequent. The state of affairs got to be so bad that the Government formed the idea of herding together all the black natives and putting them on a special reserve on Tasman Peninsula. The help of the settlers was enlisted, and a cordon was formed round the whole island, as if it were to be beaten for game. The cordon gradually closed in on Tasman Peninsula after some weeks of "beating" the forests. It was found then that one aboriginal woman had been captured! Such a result might have been foreseen. The cordon did not embrace 2,000 settlers. The idea of these being able to drive before them a whole native race familiar with the bush was absurd.

"Tasmanian Tiger" and "Tasmanian Devil"

After that the old conditions ruled in Tasmania. Blacks and whites were in constant conflict, and the black race quickly perished. To-day there is not a single member of that race alive, Truganini, its last representative, having died in 1876.

The fauna of Tasmania is also in some respects markedly different from that of Australia. Most of the Australian animals are represented, but there exist in addition, as peculiar to Tasmania, the "Tasmanian Tiger" and the "Tasmanian Devil," which are the last representatives of carnivorous marsupials. The "tiger" is about the size of a small Bengal tiger, the "devil" about the size of a large wild-cat. Both are extremely fierce and bloodthirsty, but are now almost extinct.

Fruit Garden of the Antipodes

The "tiger" would ravage a whole flock of sheep in a night. The "devil" would attack any man or beast.

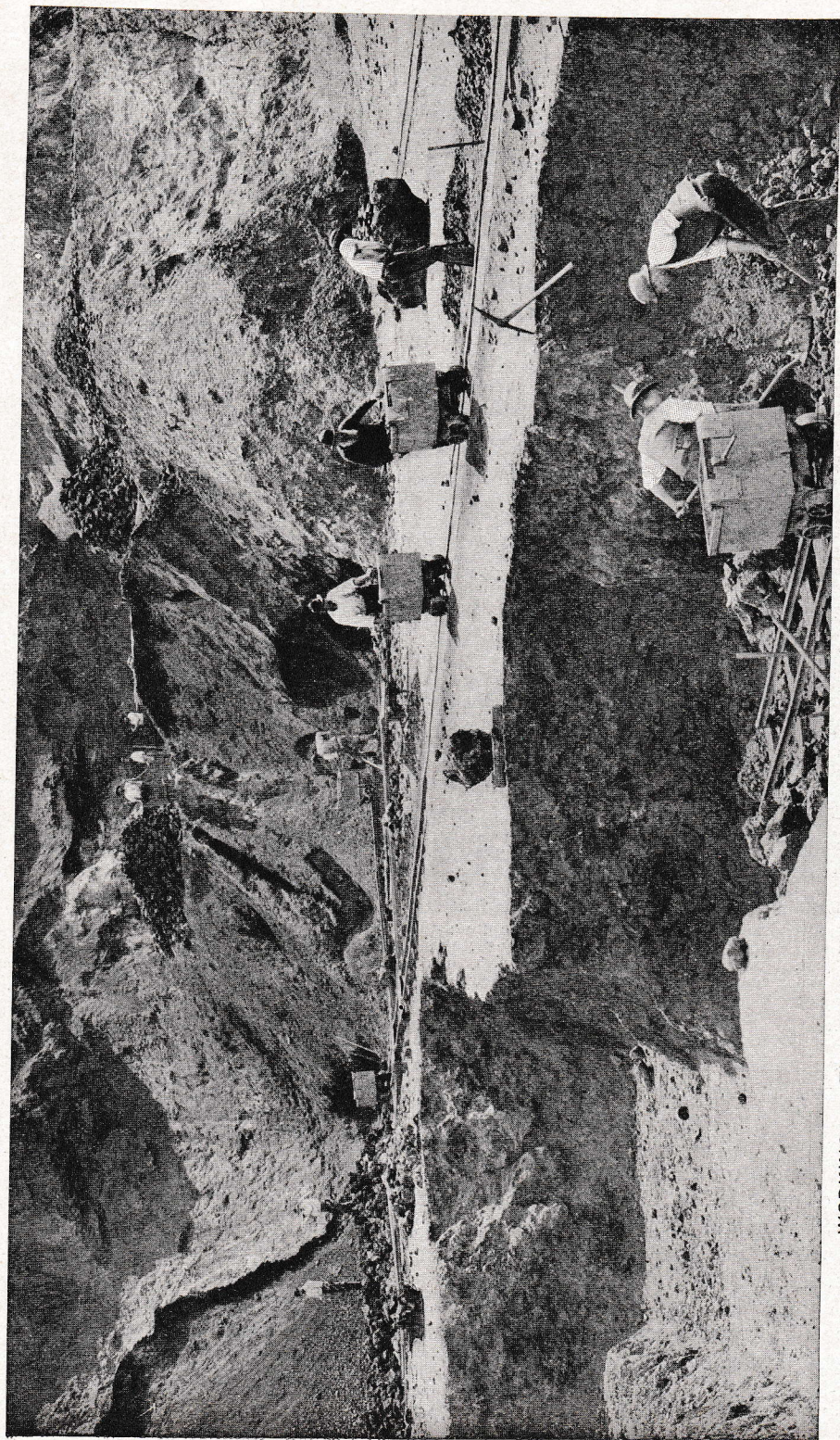
Most European animals thrive in Tasmania. It is a notable place for breeding the highest quality of sheep. Horses and dairy cattle flourish. Deer



HYDRAULIC SLUICING IN A TIN MINE ON THE NORTH-EAST COAST OF TASMANIA

Tasmania is showing most commendable energy in harnessing the inexhaustible resources of water-power that exist, and applying them to the generation of power for industrial purposes. It is estimated that 500,000 h.p. can be obtained, and factories to utilise as much as possible of this are projected and being constructed. Work initiated by the Hydro-electric Power and Metallurgical Company was taken over by the Government in 1914, and a special scale of charges has been established for the employment of water-power in various industries

Photo, Tasmanian Government



WORKING A TIN FACE IN THE FAMOUS MOUNT BISCHOFF MINE IN RUSSELL COUNTY

Tasmania's mineral wealth is considerable, especially in copper and tin, its production of the latter exceeding that of any other state in the Commonwealth. At one time mining was the foremost industry in Tasmania, but the total mineral production is decreasing in quantity, though its total value of about £1,500,000, averaged since the beginning of this century, is approximately maintained by the increase in prices. Mount Bischoff, in Russell county, is the chief source of tin in Tasmania. It is worked as an open quarry, and since it was first tapped has paid very large dividends

Photo, Beattie



TASMANIAN FORESTERS ENGAGING IN A WOOD-CHOPPING MATCH

Expert woodsmen develop a dexterity in the use of the axe positively astonishing to the prentice hand who, with much pain and effort, merely succeeds in butchering a tree. They place each blow with perfect precision, freeing and swinging the axe with rhythmic celerity and beautiful ease. Wood-chopping competitions are a frequent amusement in the timberlands of Tasmania

Photo, Publishers' Photo Service

do well. Some South African and European animals have been acclimatised.

Tasmania has an area of 26,215 square miles. The coast is very wild and picturesque in the south and on the west. In the centre of the island is a great chain of lakes. There are several important mountain systems and some great rivers, such as the Derwent, the Huon, and the Tamar. The climate is far more equable than that of the mainland.

Up till very recently Tasmanian industry depended chiefly on farming, stock-breeding, and the tin, copper, and silver-lead mines. Lately the island has developed ambitions to become a

manufacturing State by developing hydro-electrical energy. Vast water power resources exist and they are being harnessed for the generation of power. It is estimated that at least 500,000 h.p. can be obtained. Already works developing 34,000 h.p. are in operation.

But whatever may be the future manufacturing developments, it may be presumed that Tasmania will draw always the greatest part of her wealth from her good, well-watered soil, and a gentle, sunny climate. She is very well suited to be the fruit garden of the Antipodes and the summer resort of the Australian population.